



# Antony Gormley

## Field for the British Isles

Education information pack

ARTS COUNCIL COLLECTION AT

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**CENTRE**

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**Cover image:**

**Antony Gormley**

*Field for the British Isles*, 1993

Terracotta

Variable size: approx. 40,000 elements, each 8-26 cm tall

Installation view, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland

Arts Council Collection, England

[Photographer not known]

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# How to use this pack

This pack is designed for use by gallery education staff, teachers and other educators. It provides background information about Antony Gormley and the making of *Field for the British Isles* (1993), as well as a section outlining some of the key themes arising from the work, along with activity suggestions. These could form part of a project before, during, or after a visit to see the exhibition. Informed by current National Curriculum requirements, they are targeted primarily at Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils, though could also be adapted for older or younger pupils. Information in the pack will also prove useful for pupils undertaking GCSE and 'A' level projects.

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The pack was commissioned by the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre and was researched and written by Fiona Godfrey, Arts & Education Consultant ([www.fionagodfrey.org.uk](http://www.fionagodfrey.org.uk)).

## The Arts Council Collection

For nearly 70 years, the Arts Council Collection has supported artists based in the UK by purchasing their work. Now numbering nearly 8,000 artworks, and including many of the best-known names in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century British art, it is the most widely circulated of all national collections, reaching beyond museums and galleries into schools, hospitals, universities and libraries. The Collection has been built through the support of the many distinguished artists, curators and writers who have been invited to advise on the purchase of works and it is arguably in this very open and democratic approach to acquisition that the Collection's greatest strength lies.

The Arts Council Collection is managed by the Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London, on behalf of Arts Council England and is based at the Hayward in London and at Longside, Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

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# Introduction

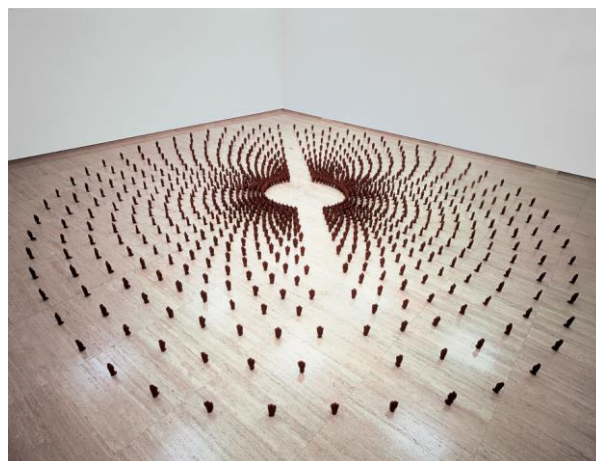
*Field for the British Isles* (1993) is an installation piece comprising around forty thousand small clay figures. Each one is unique and is simply fashioned, with holes for eyes. The figures completely occupy the space in which they are installed, filling the space so the viewer can look at the figures, but cannot enter the space they occupy. The installation is always sited such that there is only a single viewpoint. The dimensions of the viewing area are always equivalent to no less than one sixth of the total floor area of the piece.

*Field for the British Isles* (1993) won Antony Gormley the Turner Prize in 1994. In 1995 it was purchased for the Arts Council Collection and is one the Collection's most ambitious acquisitions to date. The purchase was achieved with the support of the Henry Moore Foundation and the National Art Collections Fund.

## History

*Field for the British Isles* (1993) is one of number of different *Fields* made in collaboration with communities around the world. The first *Field* was made in 1989 and comprised just 150 figures. It was made by Gormley with the help of his studio assistants and shown in New York.

The same year, he created a second *Field* in Sydney, Australia. This comprised 1100 figures and was made with the help of students. These first pieces were laid out in radiating circles, facing inwards. In the Australian version the viewer could walk into the space in the middle.



**Antony Gormley**  
*Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1989*  
Terracotta  
23 x 1140 x 1050 cm  
Photograph by Artist

A third *Field* was created in 1990, working with a family of brick-makers in Mexico. It comprised thirty-five thousand figures made by about sixty men, women and children aged from six to over sixty, mostly members of the extended family. This was the first version in which the figures were designed to fill a space, blocking it out and obstructing the viewer from entering. This piece is sometimes known as the *American Field*, and was a precursor to the European versions.

*Field for the British Isles* was created in 1993 and since then Gormley has created further versions around the world.

In the same year that he made *Field for the British Isles*, Gormley worked with children from a town in the Amazon Basin, to revive a brick factory and produce a *Field* for the exhibition *Arte Amazonas* held at the Museu de Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the Earth Summit and Global Forum. Comprising 25,000 figures, the figures were arranged in a circle, facing outwards, with an open space at the centre.



**Antony Gormley**

*Amazonian Field*, 1992

Terracotta

Variable size: approx. 24,000 elements, each 4-40 cm

Installation view CCBB, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012

Photograph by Vicente de Mello, Rio de Janeiro



**Antony Gormley**

*European Field*, 1993

Terracotta

Variable size: approx. 40,000 elements, each 8-26 cm high

Installation view, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany, 1997

Commissioned by Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden

Photograph by Helmut Kunde, Kiel

*European Field* was created in 1993 with the help of students and families at Ostra Grevie in Sweden. The 40,000 figures in this piece were arranged as a forward-facing mass, filling a gallery space at Malmö Konsthall. The piece subsequently toured to a number of venues in Europe.

The year 2003 saw the creation of Gormley's largest *Field* yet. *Asian Field* was crafted by 350 Chinese villagers from the Guangdong Province in five days from 125 tonnes of red clay. It comprises over 200,000 figures and was first shown in Guangzhou in China. When it was shown at the 2006 Sydney Biennale, there was contention over the appropriation of other people's handiwork and some of the figures were stolen in protest.

## Making

To create *Field for the British Isles*, Antony Gormley collaborated with Tate Liverpool and pupils from two schools in St Helens in Merseyside (Sutton Community High and Sherdley County Primary) along with their families and others living in the vicinity. This collaborative



aspect had always been key to Gormley's concept for his *Field* pieces. The figures were fired at a local brickmaking company, who also supplied the clay.



In all, about a hundred people were involved in making *Field for the British Isles* and it took a week to complete. Many people committed themselves to making figures for the full five days. The minimum involvement was two full days, working from 9am until 5pm.

*Work in progress, 2003*  
Xiangshan, China  
Photographs by Zhang Haier

To make the figures, each person was given a board on which to place a lump of clay; a small pot of water and a pencil to make the eye holes. They were also given a cushion to sit on and sufficient floor-space to be able to set out the figures in rows of ten (for ease of counting). Everyone was encouraged to find their own way of making, as long as they met the requirements, which were that the pieces should be hand-sized and easy to hold, the eyes deep and close, and the proportions of the head to the body roughly correct. Participants were simply asked to shape a head and body, flatten the base so it stood up, and then make it conscious by giving it eyes with the point of a sharpened pencil.



*'That repeated action of taking a hand-sized ball of clay, squeezing it between your hands, standing it up and giving it consciousness becomes meditative, the repeated action becoming almost like breathing, or a heartbeat.'*

Antony Gormley, interviewed by the Daily Mail, 2012

At the end of each day the figures produced that day were counted, keeping a running total. Figures range in size from 8–26 centimetres tall. This is how Gormley himself has described the process:

*‘What started as work, turned quite quickly into a kind of self-generating energy in which people could celebrate their differences. For some it was difficult at first to accept that differences were tolerable — a brick is judged by its conformity to a standard. What we were doing was each finding our own way of making a hand-sized equivalent for the individual body as fast as possible, but at the same time we were contributing to this image of the collective body.’*

<http://www.jca-online.com/gormley.html>

Once the figures were fired, two lorry journeys were required to transport all forty thousand from St Helens to Liverpool, ready to be ‘planted out’ in the gallery.

*Work in progress, 2003*  
Xiangshan, China  
Photograph by Zhang Haier



## Installation

Since 1993, *Field for the British Isles* has toured to many different locations and venues in the UK. The task of installing it is a carefully organised task, undertaken by local volunteers working with staff from the Arts Council Collection.

The installation can take up to five days with as many as 20 volunteers. The installers are fully briefed on the history, concept and making of *Field*. Their collaboration in installing the work is a continuation of the project - it is creative work, like spontaneous weaving or painting. As the work progresses the installers become more attuned to the size and colour of the figures, allowing the colours to flow. They start at the back moving gradually forward so when finished the floor will not be visible. Each figure faces forward - their gaze should be parallel and turned towards the threshold. The ‘Stargazers’ which fill the threshold area at the front can be identified as their eyes are on the top of their heads rather than looking straight ahead. Installers must regularly return to the threshold to check for gaps and colour.

*‘Almost like water it settles into place and when we are confronted by their gaze – it is almost as if we have become the exhibit.’*

# **Where *Field for the British Isles* (1993) has been seen**

Since it was first created, *Field for the British Isles* (1993) has been seen at:

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (1994)

Oriel Mostyn, Llandudno (1994)

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (1994)

Orchard Gallery, Derry, Northern Ireland (1995)

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England (1995)

The National Gallery of Wales, Cardiff (1995)

Greensfield BR Works (1996)

Firstsite, Colchester (1999)

Salisbury Cathedral (1999)

Weston Park Museum, Sheffield City Art Galleries (1999)

Aberystwyth Arts Centre (2000)

Tate St. Ives, Cornwall (2001)

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Shrewsbury (2001)

Tullie House, Carlisle (2002)

The British Museum, London (2002-3)

Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln (2003)

Gloucester Cathedral (2004)

Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2005)

Helens Metropolitan Borough Council (2008)

Torre Abbey Historic House and Gallery, Devon (2009)

Barrington Court, Somerset (2012)

20-21 Visual Art Centre, Scunthorpe (2015)



# Antony Gormley – biography

*'I think the primary drive in the making of sculpture is to inscribe on an indifferent universe some indication that we were here, and it's a futile attempt but it's what led to the making of the pyramids, the making of the Moai by the Rapa Nui or the making of Stonehenge. We know that in the truth of geological time, our lives are as dust, we have consciousness and they have eternity, or something close to what a rock has, the capability of enduring time longer than we do...'*

Antony Gormley, What Do Artists Do All Day? BBC Four (2014)



Moai Figures, Easter Island, Polynesia

Antony Gormley was born in London in 1950 into a catholic family, the youngest of seven children. His mother was German and his father was Irish. He attended the Benedictine boarding school Ampleforth College, in Yorkshire, which he regards as formative experience.

*'I was brought up by monks and I think there is a part of me that is indelibly touched or formed, by that idea of a mix of silent contemplation, active work, and then some kind of labour that is between the two.'*

What Do Artists Do All Day? (Antony Gormley) BBC Four (2014)

His childhood was rich in culture, and he recalls the impact of his early encounters with art, such as seeing the huge head of Ramses II in the British Museum and the excavations of the Roman Villa at Fishbourne, near Chichester.

*'That was such a revelation. All those intricate and brilliant mosaics of dolphins and lions emerging out of the earth. I always loved looking at things that were hidden and then revealed.'*

Guardian article, Nicholas Wroe, Saturday 25 June 2005

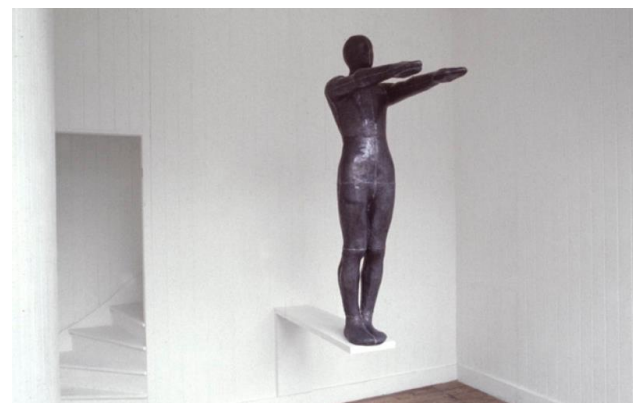
Gormley went to Trinity College, Cambridge between 1968 and 1971, where he studied Archaeology, Anthropology and the History of Art. Here he came into contact with artists-in-residence including Barry Flanagan and Michael Craig-Martin. He gained a reputation for painting murals, and was paid for producing some of these. This helped fund a period of

travel in India and Sri Lanka, where he pursued his interest in Buddhism, studied meditation and reached the decision to become an artist. On his return in 1974, he took a degree in fine Art at Saint Martin's School of Art and Goldsmiths in London, followed by a postgraduate course in sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London, from 1977 to 1979.

In the late 1970s, a number of artists were taking art outside of the gallery and engaging with the landscape and nature. Antony Gormley's first sculptural works were aligned with this movement. For example, *Flat Tree* (1978) was made while he was still a postgraduate student at The Slade School of Fine Art and consisted of the trunk of a small larch sawn into thin slices and arranged on the floor in the form of a spiral. Many '*land artists*' also created ephemeral or performance based pieces, and this was true of Gormley's piece *Rearranged Desert* (1979) made in Arizona. To make it, he constructed a cairn from stones cleared from a circular area, the radius of which was determined by the furthest distance he could throw a hand-sized stone. He subsequently dismantled the cairn by throwing each of the stones as far as possible. During this period, Gormley also made a number of works using bread as a material, such as *Bread Line* (1979) which consisted of slices of bread arranged in a line across the floor.

1981 saw the first significant exhibition of Gormley's work, alongside the work of another young sculptor, Tony Cragg, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, in London. Gormley's work during this period was already starting to explore ideas about the absence and presence of the human body. One piece in the show - *Bed* (1980 – 81) comprised two beds made of slices of bread, each with a body-shaped hole, created by Gormley eating the bread. This marked Gormley's transition to work that was explicitly about the human figure, a theme which has characterised his work since.

From the early 1980s he began making sculptures that were based on casts of his own body. In 1983, he used this method to create the piece *Untitled (Diving Figure)* (1983). The figure is mounted on the gallery wall, poised to dive, such that it changes the viewer's perceptions of the gallery space, suggesting a transformation of the floor into water.



**Antony Gormley**  
*Untitled (Diving Figure)*, 1983  
Lead, fibreglass, plaster and air  
192.5 x 51 x 91cm

Throughout the 1980s Gormley worked with groupings of figures and during the late 1980s, began exploring his interest in multiple, collaborative pieces, creating his first *Field* in 1989. Over the years that followed, he became one of Britain's best-known sculptors, creating both gallery-based works and a number of ambitious public projects which explore the body, relationships, consciousness and collectivity.



During the 1990s, Gormley continued making works based both on the single figure and groups. 1996 saw another collaborative work, with echoes of the qualities of *Field for the British Isles* (1993). *Allotment* (1996) comprised 300 life-size blocks derived from the precise dimensions of volunteers in Malmö, Sweden.

**Antony Gormley**

*Allotment II*, 1996

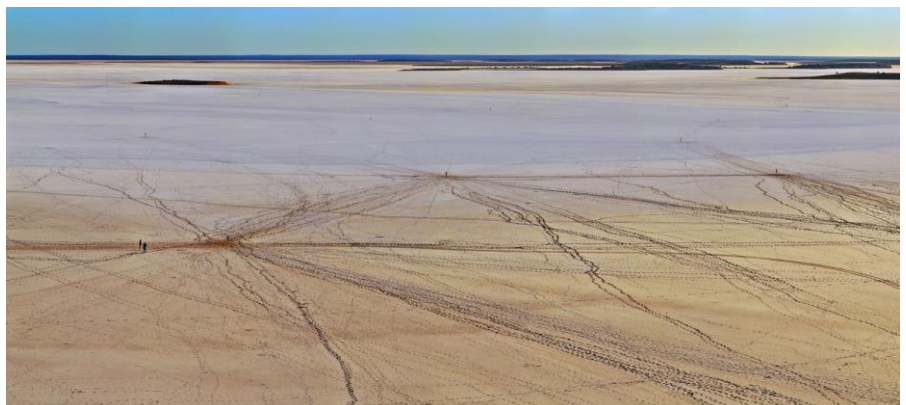
Installation view, Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria, 2009

Photograph by Markus Tretter, Bregenz

One of Gormley's ambitious British works is *Another Place* (1997). This comprises a hundred cast-iron figures, made from seventeen slightly different moulds, which were installed on the beach facing the open sea for three kilometres either side of the tideline on Crosby Beach, Merseyside in 2005. The work involved complex administrative negotiations with coastguards, the RSPB and various other agencies and it was only in 2007 that the figures were finally allowed to stay.

Another of Gormley's well-known works is *Angel of the North* (1998), which stands near the A1 in Gateshead. The towering figure is constructed from the dimensions of his body and mathematically enlarged to stand sixty-five feet high with a wingspan of one hundred and seventy-seven feet.

In 2002-3, Gormley made a piece that connected to his background in anthropology. *Inside Australia* (2002-3) was situated on the western end of Lake Ballard in Western Australia; an area of culturally significant ancient land stretching for over twenty kilometres. Working with the inhabitants of the area, Gormley created fifty-one figures, life-sized in height but shrunk by two-thirds in the horizontal dimension. These were positioned about seven hundred and fifty metres apart, looking rather like, as he describes it, 'tuning forks' in the landscape ([www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)). As people move to and between the figures, they leave traces across the ground.



**Antony Gormley**

*Inside Australia*, 2003

Cast alloy of iron, molybdenum, iridium, vanadium and titanium

Commission for 50th Perth International Arts Festival, Western Australia, 2003, installed in Lake Ballard

Photograph by Ashley de Prazer, Perth

*Event Horizon* was an installation which was shown in London in 2007, followed by New York and São Paulo in 2012. The piece consisted of thirty-one life-sized casts of Gormley's body, four made of cast iron and twenty-seven made of fibreglass, which were installed on the top of buildings.

In 2009, he took on the challenge of creating an art work for the empty 'fourth plinth' in Trafalgar Square. He invited members of the public to apply to stand on the plinth for a period of one hour. For a hundred successive days, the plinth was occupied around the clock, creating a 'living monument'.

Gormley now works from a large studio in Kings Cross, London, supported by a team of assistants. He values this collaborative approach.

*'The first ten years were very, very hard and very lonely and I delight in the fact that I work in company and I'm no longer in ill-lit, damp, ex-industrial spaces and I rejoice in it. I just think it's absolutely the best thing that could ever have happened, that I'm joined in my madness by others that seem happy to be infected by it.'*

What Do Artists Do All Day? BBC Four (2014)



Portrait of Antony Gormley,  
Photograph by India Carpenter, 2006

Gormley's work is celebrated internationally and his sculptures have been acquired by many public and private collections around the world. He has been a Royal Academician since 2003 and a Trustee of the British Museum since 2007. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, honorary doctor of the universities of Teesside and Cambridge, and a fellow of Trinity and Jesus Colleges, Cambridge. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1994 and the South Bank Prize for Visual Art in 1999. In 2014 he was knighted for his services to the arts. He is married to the artist Vicken Parsons (who has also had work purchased by the Arts Council Collection) and has two sons and a daughter.

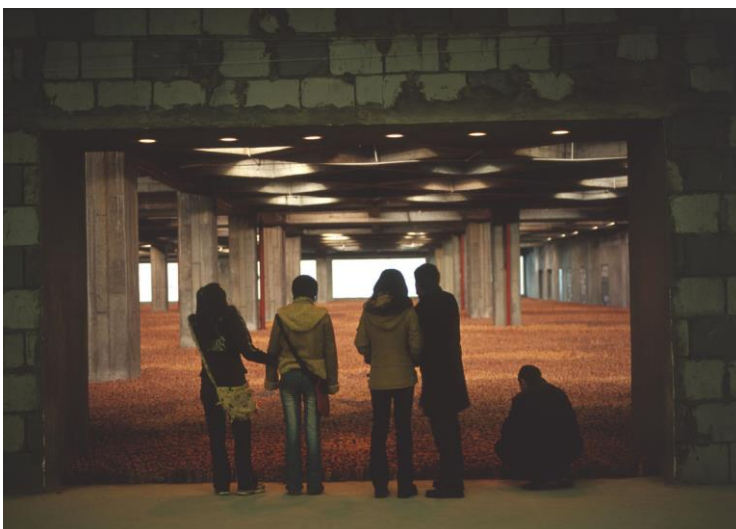


# Themes and project ideas

The sections that follow offer project and activity ideas inspired by *Field for the British Isles* (1993) and other relevant examples of Gormley's work.

Some simple starting points for inviting pupils to engage with the piece when in the gallery are:

- Use the sentence stem '*I can see...*' to invite pupils to respond imaginatively to the installation.
- Use the sentence stem '*I feel...*' to invite pupils to share their emotional reactions to the piece.
- Use the sentence stem '*I think...*' to invite pupils to share their ideas and thoughts about the installation.
- Use the sentence stem '*I wonder....*' to invite pupils to formulate questions about the piece. Support pupils by suggesting question words they could use such as '*where...*', '*how...*', '*who...*', '*why...*' etc.



Asian Field, 2003  
Clay from Guangdong Province, China,  
210,000 hand-sized clay elements  
Installation view, Modern Mall, Jiangbei  
District, Chongqing, China



# The human figure

**Key themes:** appearance, body, figure, proportion, spirituality, symbol

## Ideas to explore

Since the early 1980s, Gormley has consistently made work that focuses on the human body. He has described how he works with the body since it is the fundamental space that we all live in and because there are so many possibilities for how we can use it and experience it. He generally uses his own body as his starting point and has explored this in many different ways.

Gormley himself has contrasted his approach to the human form with those of father and son Nicola and Giovanni Pisano who lived in Pisa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They were perhaps the first European artists known to have focused attention on the human body. However, in their work the human body was used to depict narratives of power, religion and politics, themes that Gormley has rejected. The European Renaissance tradition also increasingly came to focus on appearance; representing notions of beauty and proportion that continued to be an aspiration in Western art for many centuries. This approach to the human figure has also been rejected by Gormley, who works with the idea of the body as it is, rather than idealised or altered.

*Field for the British Isles* (1993) contrasts with many of Gormley's other works, in that the figures aren't based on a real human shape, but adopt the most simplified image that can read as a human figure. The figures that comprise *Field for the British Isles* (1993) come close in appearance to some of the objects made by ancient cultures. One example is the Dogū figures made during the Japanese Jōmon period (approximately 10,000–300BC).



Dogū, Figurine, Jomon  
Musée Guimet, Paris

Referencing his background in archaeology, Gormley himself has also likened the figures in *Field* to late Neolithic and early Bronze Age figurines from Mesopotamia (the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers which now primarily forms part of Iraq) and the Indus Valley (now part of Afghanistan and Pakistan). Archaeological finds from these ancient cultures have yielded many examples of simplified human figures, including many of the female form. What their purpose was often remains unclear.

Neolithic figurine  
4500-3200 BC  
National Archaeological  
Museum of Athens



## **Activity ideas**

*Pupils could research, sketch, compare and contrast different approaches to the human form in sculpture. They could find sculptures they like and talk about, or write about their preferences.*

*Pupils could be invited to investigate examples of objects based on the human form from different times and cultures, and make comparisons about how they were made, including different materials, methods and stylistic conventions.*

*Pupils could use clay or junk modelling to experiment with creating different versions of very simple representations of human body, perhaps adding symbolic decoration.*

*Using photography and back lighting, pupils could create photographs depicting different silhouettes of themselves in different postures. What forms can they adopt in which they cease to look like a human being?*

# A place for art

**Key themes:** installation, location, place, space, sculpture

## Ideas to explore

While the term 'sculpture' is generally used to describe an art work that can be walked around or seen from all angles, the term 'installation' is generally used to describe an art work that can be walked through, or into. *Field for the British Isles* (1993) however, defies both descriptions, as the figures fill out the space in which they are placed. There is no room for the audience, and the threshold cannot be crossed. Wherever the piece is situated, it appears to flow like water into corners and voids, continuing out of doorways and into recesses.

The title of the work refers to the notion of a field both in the landscape and in art. The figures are often described as being '*planted out*' when the work is installed, making a reference to crops and agriculture. The title also references the notion of a field in painting; the idea of a 'colour field' or our 'field of vision'.

Antony Gormley has always been interested in the relationship between art works and the places in which they are sited. Speaking in 2005, he recognised a dilemma for contemporary sculptors, saying:

*'Sculpture may now have come down from its plinth and where it belongs is perhaps not very clear.'*

Guardian article, Nicholas Wroe, 2005,

Gormley is one of a number of sculptors who have experimented with different locations for sculpture, both in and outside of the gallery. His works have been seen on mountains, in city squares, on beaches and in deserts. In the gallery context, his sculptures sometimes hang from the ceiling or create a tension with the gallery wall. His work often challenges perceptions, inviting the viewer to see the space in which the sculpture is located in new and different ways.



**Antony Gormley**

*Learning to Think*, 1991

Lead, fibreglass and air

173 x 56 x 31 cm (Total of 5 bodyforms)

Installation view, Old Jail, Charleston, USA

Part of - Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival, 1991

Photograph by John McWilliams, Atlanta, Georgia

In his piece *Untitled (Diving Figure)* (1983) Gormley transforms the gallery floor into water in the viewer's imagination. For *Event Horizon* (2007), life-sized figures, based on casts of his body, were installed on the top of buildings around the city. This work invited people to change their reading of the city environment, as described by Gormley on his website:

*'It was great to see an individual or groups of people pointing at the horizon. This transfer of the stillness of sculpture to the stillness of an observer is exciting to me: reflexivity becoming shared. In that time the flow of daily life is momentarily stilled. EVENT HORIZON hopes to activate the skyline in order to encourage people to look around. In this process of looking and finding, or looking and seeking, one perhaps re-assesses one's own position in the world and becomes aware of one's status of embedment....*

*The field of the installation has no defining boundary. The sculptures act as spatial acupuncture. They enter in and out of visibility and present to people on the street a sequence of prospects with different sculptures coming into view. One of the implications of EVENT HORIZON is that people will have to entertain an uncertainty about the work's scope: about the spread and number of figures. Beyond those that you can actually see, how many more remain out of sight?'*

[www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)

## **Activity ideas**

*Pupils could be invited to research the range of outdoor places in the world where art works have been found, and situated. They could look at examples of land art by artists such as Richard Long and Robert Smithson, as well as historical examples such as the Wiltshire 'white horses', or the Nazca lines in Peru.*

*Pupils could be asked to plan or make sculptures that are specific to a particular place or environment. These might fit into corners or flow around walls for example.*

*Pupils could be invited to discuss, or consider, the issues involved in creating art works for outdoor or public places, including scale, visibility, durability of materials, health and safety and security.*

# Strength in numbers

**Key themes:** eyes, gaze, looking, mass, observation, power, viewpoint

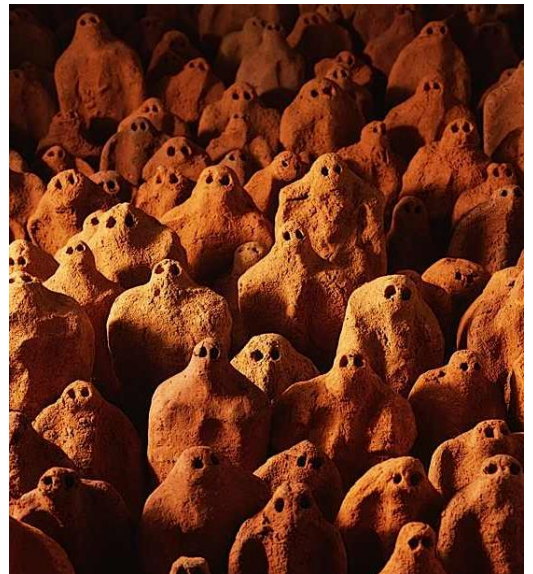
## Ideas to explore

A powerful dimension of *Field for the British Isles* (1993) is the way in which it plays with ideas about power. The viewer has the experience of being stared at by myriad of eyes and there is an unsettling sense of uncertainty about who holds the power in this relationship. The figures are diminished in power by their very small size, yet confront us with their intimidating numbers. The work also creates a kind of reversal in which we, as viewer, become the subject and the art work becomes our audience.

**Antony Gormley**

*American Field*, 1991

Variable size: approx. 35 000 elements, each 8-26 cm  
Installation view, Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York, USA, 1991  
Photograph by Joseph Coscia, Jnr., New York



Ever since the world was confronted by the Mona Lisa's mysterious stare, artists painting the human figure have explored the potential of eyes. We can think of paintings by artists such as El Greco, who used the direction of the subject's gaze in different ways, in some cases looking heavenwards in apparent ecstasy, in others brazenly gazing back at us with full eye contact.

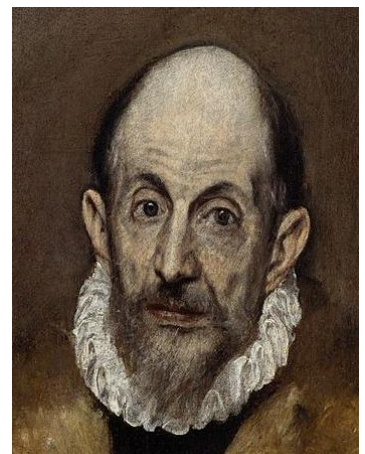
**El Greco**

*The Disrobing of Christ* (1577–1579)

Oil on canvas

285 × 173 cm

Sacristy of the Cathedral, Toledo



**El Greco**

*Portrait of a Man* (presumed self-portrait of El Greco), circa 1595–1600,

Oil on canvas

52.7 × 46.7 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art, United States



Antony Gormley has been interested in the subtle variations of the positioning of the eyes in the figures that make up *Field*, describing those that have their eyes towards the top of their head as the 'stargazers'.

Looking at the mass of figures in *Field*, it starts to become possible to spot individual characters. The work thus also raises questions about diversity and unity; the individual and the group. We can bring our imagination to bear on who these figures might be and whether their presence is menacing or benign. Have they chosen to come together as a group, or have been rounded up? Without mouths, this ambiguity is enhanced through their apparent silence.

## **Activity ideas**

*Pupils could investigate the many different ways in which eyes are modelled in sculptures and carvings. They could discuss the impact of the 'blank', yet anatomically accurate eyes depicted in many sculptures, as well those that are stuck on and those that are carved away. Which do they think create the most effective sense of 'looking'? Using clay or other modelling materials, pupils could be invited to try different ways of modelling eyes, taking inspiration from their investigations.*

*Pupils could be invited to research how artists have used the impact of eyes in paintings and sculptures. They could find examples where they think eyes have been added in a particular way for a particular effect and comment on the effect. Pupils could be invited could make portraits or self-portraits and experiment with the positioning and gaze of the eyes, considering what impact this has on mood and expression.*

*Working with for example printmaking, or collage, pupils could make art works that use a multitude of eyes to create the sense of a collective gaze.*

# A collaborative task

**Key themes:** collaboration, participation, mass-production, maths, multiple

## Ideas to explore

In his work, Gormley has explored both the idea of the single figure and the group. As a sculptor, he started out working alone, but became increasingly interested in working with other people to create his pieces.

*Work in progress, 2003*  
Xiangshan, China  
Photograph by Zhang Haier



For his *Field* projects, he has always worked with groups of people, often families and local communities, to maximise the productivity that can be created when a group of people come together and put their collective energies into a project. It is extraordinary that the figures in *Field for the British Isles* (1993) took just a week to make. *Field* can be linked to the history of mass-production in which human labour gave way to mechanised forms of production. Gormley himself has described the making of *Field* in ways that link it with agricultural work:

*'It is a kind of harvesting – it's about tilling the earth with your hands but instead of making something grow it is the earth you are forming directly. The harvest comes from within the people, or the thing that is growing comes out of the people. Everyone has their own row and throughout the project they continue to do row after row on the same strip like the old medieval strip field and they build up a very strong relationship with that patch of earth.'*



In terms of its scale, *Field for the British Isles* (1993) holds echoes of the Terracotta army, an eight-thousand strong collection of terracotta figures that were discovered by accident in 1974 at Xian, in China. The figures were made to guard the tomb of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang di, who lived over 2000 years ago. Like the figures in *Field*, each one is unique.

*Field* can be compared to other art works that comprise multiple elements. One example is *Sunflower Seeds* (2010); by the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, an installation of one-hundred million tiny porcelain sunflower seeds that filled the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, or the piece *1550 Chairs Stacked Between Two City Buildings* (2002) by the Columbian artist Doris Salcedo.



**Doris Salcedo**  
*1550 Chairs Stacked Between Two City Buildings* (2002)  
Istanbul Biennial  
Photograph Muammer Yanmaz

## ***Activity ideas***

*Field for the British Isles* (1993) offers many opportunities to apply maths to art.

*Pupils could be invited how they could estimate the number of figures in the piece. They could be asked to calculate how many figures would be needed to fill gallery plans of different sizes. They could be asked to estimate how long the line would be if the figures were laid out in a queue.*

*They could estimate how many figures came from one bag of clay and work out how many bags of clay were needed to create the installation. They could be asked to calculate how long it would take to create installations of different sizes.*

*Pupils could work in groups and apply maths to plans for making their own composite, collaborative art works, calculating the time, cost and volumes of materials needed to make their piece.*

# Making and materials

**Key themes:** clay, crafting, handmade, process, technology

## Ideas to explore

The figures that make up *Field for the British Isles* (1993) are made from fired, unglazed terracotta clay. They are simply fashioned and have a rough and raw quality to them. Gormley wanted to work with clay for his *Field* projects, because it is such a simple, natural material; one of the basic materials from which our world is made. He also wanted to work with clay because it would retain a strong sense of how people's hands had worked to make the figures.



*Work in progress, 2003*  
Xiangshan, China  
Photograph by Zhang Haier

*'What I've encouraged people to do is to treat the clay almost as an extension of their own bodies. And this takes some time. This repeated act of taking a ball of clay, and using the space between the hands as a kind of matrix, as a kind of mould out of which the form arises.'*

Antony Gormley, Tate Gallery Education Pack

Gormley is perhaps best known for his figures that are based on casts of his own body. These create the sense of a trace of somebody who existed in a particular place, but is no longer there. He used to make these casts by covering himself in cling film, so that his assistants could cover him in plaster and scrim. The whole process would take around an hour and a half. The process would become something of a meditation, as the process necessitated him staying still for several hours at a time, which could be really painful at times.

Today, computer technology means that he can accurately create a 3D version of his body by scanning, rather than through casting. He is able to use this technology to deconstruct, stretch and manipulate the volume of his body, while still retaining a sense of gesture, pose and proportion.

The materials from which Gormley's work is made, and the processes he uses, form an important dimension of his work. Early in the 1980s, he worked with lead, which is a metal that is strangely malleable by hand, yet poisonous. He has also worked with iron, a hugely

strong and durable material, more associated with industry than with art. Iron is the material found at the core of the planet, and in casting it Gormley had to heat it to at the same temperature as magma, which is about 1300 degrees Celsius.

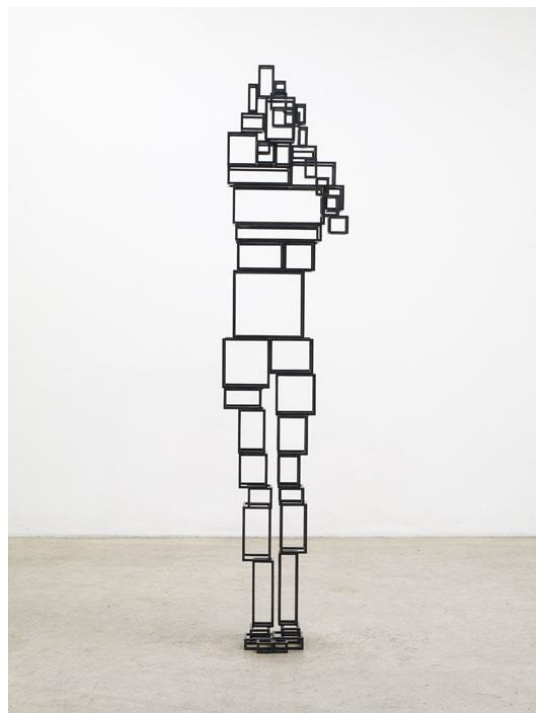
## ***Activity ideas***

*Pupils could research the history of making figures from clay, looking at examples from across times and cultures; investigating the purpose for these and stylistic variations.*

*Pupils could experiment with making their own simple figures from modelling materials. They could work on a different scale to Gormley, perhaps making versions that could fit in a shoebox, or even a matchbox.*

*Looking at some of the different approaches Antony Gormley takes to creating sculptures based on the human figure, pupils could be invited to try making human forms from a number of the same object, for example matchsticks, lollipop sticks, cubes or balls. Alternatively, they could experiment with drawing the human figure using different shapes.*

**Antony Gormley**  
*Clasp III*, 2010  
8 mm square section mild steel  
194 x 41 x 35 cm  
Photograph by Stephen White, London





# Art and spirituality

**Key themes:** celebration, collective, meditation, ritual, spiritual, worship

## Ideas to explore

Whether with the intention of inspiring worship, celebrating festivals or ritualising human experiences, much art from across times and cultures has resulted from religious or spiritual practices.

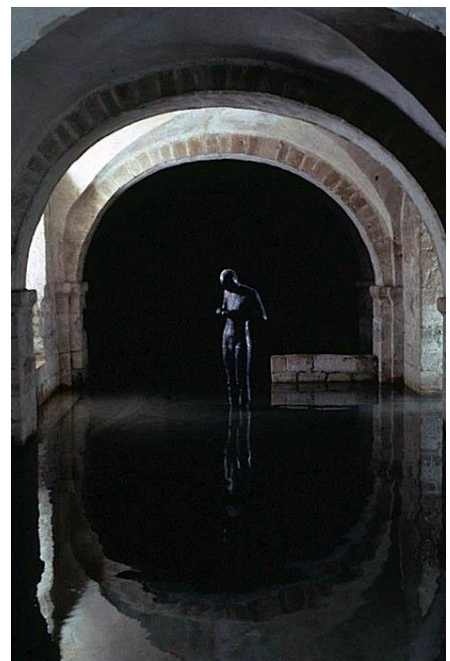
Gormley had the experience of a Catholic upbringing and went to a Benedictine boarding school where he experienced the rituals and simplicity of the monastic life. In India in the late 1970s, he trained in Vipassana meditation, a practice that emphasises what is called '*bare attention*' – a simple focus on bodily states, perceptions, and feelings that counteracts the impulse to contain these experiences in conceptual categories. Although his work is not aligned to any particular religious practice, there is nonetheless an intentionally spiritual dimension to his sculptures. He has said:

*'The challenge for contemporary art is to engage with the contemporary world without adding to the noise. I would like the work to make eloquent stillness and silence and to let us make contact with our whole selves so that we can take our place within the persistent phenomena of light, space, and nature.'*

<http://www.jca-online.com/gormley.html>

His figures invite us to contemplate different aspects of human experience.

*Sound II* (1986) is a work that Gormley made for the crypt of Winchester Cathedral. The figure, head bent, holding water in his cupped hands, could be contemplating his own reflection, or the miracle and symbolism of water, with its connections to life, baptism and renewal. When the crypt floods, as it does regularly, the figure stands in water.



**Antony Gormley**

*Sound II*, 1986

Lead, fibreglass and water,

188 x 60 x 45 cm

Permanent installation Winchester Cathedral, Winchester, UK

Photograph by Louis Bustam

*Angel of the North* (1998) stands as a lonely sentinel - a symbol of protection or inspiration for those who drive the A1 near Gateshead. As Gormley has said:

*'Nobody has seen an angel. We have to keep imagining them, and that's what I've done with this piece.'*

The life-sized figures of *Another Place* (1997) that stand on Crosby beach looking out to the distant horizon invite us to reflect on our relationship with the natural environment, our fragility as an individual and our endurance as a species.

**Antony Gormley**  
*Another Place*, 1997  
Cast iron  
189 x 53 x 29 cm (100 elements)  
Installation view, Cuxhaven, Germany  
Photograph by Helmut Kunde, Kiel



*Field for the British Isles* (1993) also has the capacity to engage the viewer in a spiritual experience, inviting us to think about what it means to be human, about relationships, individuality and the collective conscious. The quietness of the figures and the unified direction of their gaze also have the scope to bring to mind collective acts of worship, grief and celebration.

## **Activity ideas**

*Pupils could discuss what collective act the figures in *Field for the British Isles* (1993) might be engaged in, referring to recent global events that have drawn people together in acts of silent respect or commemoration.*

*Pupils could discuss or write about the phenomenon of the crowd and think about the advantages and disadvantages of being part of large group. They could discuss feelings of strength and belonging, as well as feelings of being dehumanised or stripped of their individuality. They might compare for example the recent phenomenon of 'flash mobbing' with acts of mass persecution or genocide they may have heard about in the news.*

*Pupils could be invited to research the links between religion and art, maybe taking a particular religion or culture and exploring how artistic practices have supported or inspired different spiritual practices.*

# Places to see Antony Gormley's work in the UK

(While most of those listed are permanent installations, works may not always be on display so do check before planning a visit.)

- Birmingham, City Centre** - *Iron Man* (1993)
- Cambridge, Jesus College** - *Sculpture in the Close* (2009)
- Northern Ireland, Derry** - *Sculpture for Derry Walls* (1987)
- Edinburgh, Jupiter Arts** - *Firmament* (2008)
- Edinburgh, National Galleries Scotland** - *6 Times* (2010)
- Gateshead, A1** - *Angel of the North* (1998)
- London, British Library** - *Planets* (2002)
- London, British Library** - *Witness* (2011)
- London, Limehouse Reach** - *Another Time* (2012)
- London, Roundhouse** - *You* (2005)
- London, Science Museum** - *Iron Baby* (1999)
- London, Wellcome Trust** - *Feel* (2005)
- London, 350 Marylebone Road** – *Reflection II* (2008)
- London, O2 Arena** - *Quantum Cloud* (1999)
- Manchester, Manchester Art Gallery** - *Filter* (2002)
- Merseyside, Crosby Beach** - *Another Place* (1997)
- Portland, Sculture and Quarry Trust, Dorset** - *Still Falling* (1983)
- Salisbury, Roche Court Sculpture Park** - *Another Time XII* (2010)
- Southampton, Southampton Art Gallery** - *Untitled (Diving Figure)* (1983)
- Wakefield, Yorkshire Sculpture Park** - *One and Other* (2000)
- Warwickshire, Jerwood Sculpture Collection, Ragley Hall** - *Insider VIII* (1998)
- Winchester, Winchester Cathedral** - *Sound II* (1986)

# Further reading

## Websites

Antony Gormley's own website has lots of valuable information about his work:  
**[www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)**

A half-hour programme made by BBC Four in 2014 - *What Do Artists Do All Day? Antony Gormley* - can be viewed at:  
**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03z08ms>**

The Tate Liverpool, who worked with Gormley on the creating *Field for the British Isles* have a number of resources on their website, including their own teacher's pack:  
**<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/antony-gormley-testing-world-view-field-british-isles>**

The educational website *Culture Street* profiles Antony Gormley and includes video footage of the installation of *Field for the British Isles* as well as reviews by children:  
**[http://www.culturestreet.org.uk/channel\\_artist.php?channel=reviews&id=4](http://www.culturestreet.org.uk/channel_artist.php?channel=reviews&id=4)**

The ArtFund website includes examples of Gormley's work and an animation in which he describes the risky process of making his body cast pieces.  
**<http://www.artfund.org/news/2012/11/20/six-gormley-greats>**

## Books

Hutchinson J, Gombrich E.H, Njatin L.B., **ANTONY GORMLEY**, Phaidon Press, London 1995

Caiger-Smith M, **ANTONY GORMLEY (MODERN ARTISTS SERIES)** Tate Publishing 2010

Gunter V.A, **500 FIGURES IN CLAY: CERAMIC ARTISTS CELEBRATE THE HUMAN FORM**, Lark Books 2005

Blandino B. **THE FIGURE IN FIRED CLAY**, A & C Black 2001

## Other works by Antony Gormley in the Arts Council Collection



**Antony Gormley**

*Art* (1981)

Charcoal and oil on paper

57.7 x 82.1cm



**Antony Gormley**

*Five Fishes* (1981)

Lead

7 x 70 x 200cm



**Antony Gormley**

*Bearing Light - No. 12 of 12* (1990)

Woodblock on paper

57.3 x 49.4cm Image, 40.3 x 30.3cm

(Series of twelve prints)